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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3369  
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/AFSPC COMMAND CENTER PETERSON AFB CO IMMEDIATE  
RUCOGCA/NAVSTA GUANTANAMO BAY CU IMMEDIATE  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3370

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SUBJECT: FAMILIES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS GRATEFUL FOR  
SUPPORT ON FATHER'S DAY

Classified By: A/DCM Greg Adams: For reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (C) Summary: On June 15 to celebrate Father's Day, COM held a day of recreation for over a hundred relatives, children and supporters of Cuba's political prisoners. The families were very grateful because Father's Day is a traditionally important event in Cuba. Many of the family members said that it would have been very depressing to have stayed at home with the emotional stress of having their loved ones behind bars. Leading members of the organization Ladies in White ("Damas de Blanco"), and prominent pro-democracy activists also participated in a telephone conversation with Commerce Secretary, Carlos Gutierrez during the event. End Summary.

12. (C) COM invited over 100 people on June 15 (Father's Day) to the COM residence for a barbecue and swimming. Close family members and children of political prisoners attended, as well as several former prisoners of conscience and leading pro-democracy advocates. Several of the wives, mothers and siblings of current political prisoners stated that they were very happy to spend Father's Day in the company of friends and supporters. Father's Day in Cuba is a much more important event than in the United States, and many of those in attendance explained how depressing it would have been to spend the day at home.

13. (C) During the picnic, Laura Pollan, spokesperson for Damas de Blanco, and four other Damas, as well as leading dissidents and former political prisoners Martha Beatriz Roque, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez ("Antunez") and Roberto de Miranda participated in a telephone conference call with Commerce Secretary, Carlos Gutierrez. They felt satisfied that Secretary Gutierrez had listened sympathetically to the difficulties in their present situations and demonstrated the firm support of the administration for the release of all political prisoners.

14. (C) In conversations with USINT officers during the event, several of those in attendance expressed a great deal of concern about the sharp rises in price and lack of availability of several food items, such as rice, and of other necessities, especially soap and washing powder. Prominent opposition figure Felix Bonne told poloff that he did not think that, due to the rise in fuel prices, the government could sustain recent improvements in public

transportation and power generation. These problems, coupled with the rise in food prices, could prompt the government to increase repression to avoid any manifestations of popular discontent.

15. (C) Several of the Damas, as well as opposition figures such as Francisco Chaviano and Elizardo Sanchez, said that they expected that this week the European Union would lift sanctions against Cuba. They regretted that there would be less pressure for the GOC to undertake fundamental democratic reforms, but hoped that the GOC would make at least a goodwill gesture, such as the release of some political prisoners.

16. (C) Dama de Blanco Berta Soler spoke of the difficulty she had this past week receiving money through Western Union sent from a private organization in the United States. Initially Western Union told Berta that by US law she cannot receive such funds because she is not a close relative of the sender. She said that she eventually got the money after trying at several locations. She said that if Western Union continues such a policy, many of the families of political prisoners will be in dire straits because the GOC prevents them from working, and the families rely on the support of outside organizations.

PARMLY